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The Best of Poe









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The Best of Poe

Edgar Allan Poe



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about the author

Edgar Allan Poe was born in 1809 in Boston, Massachusetts. Left an orphan at the age of two, he was adopted in 1811 by his uncle, John Allan of Richmond, Virginia. He entered the University of Virginia, but left because he was always drinking and gambling rather than studying. He was later dismissed from West Point for repeatedly breaking the rules. When John Allan died in 1834, Poe was left penniless and rejected.

In 1836 Poe married his thirteen-year-old cousin, Virginia Clemm. Their life was hard, since Poe made very little money from his writing. When Virginia died in 1847, Poe began to drink and gamble more than ever, causing him to live in constant misery. His short stories, however, were becoming popular—even in Europe, where they were translated into French by such writers as Baudelaire and Mallarmé.

Throughout his career, Poe suffered long periods of sickness bordering on insanity. This and his continual drinking made him often fear that he was losing his mind entirely. The end came in 1849 when he was found dying in a Baltimore gutter. Edgar Allan Poe was one of the most misunderstood men of his time—but he was also one of America's greatest short story writers.

Edgar Allan Poe

The Best Of POE



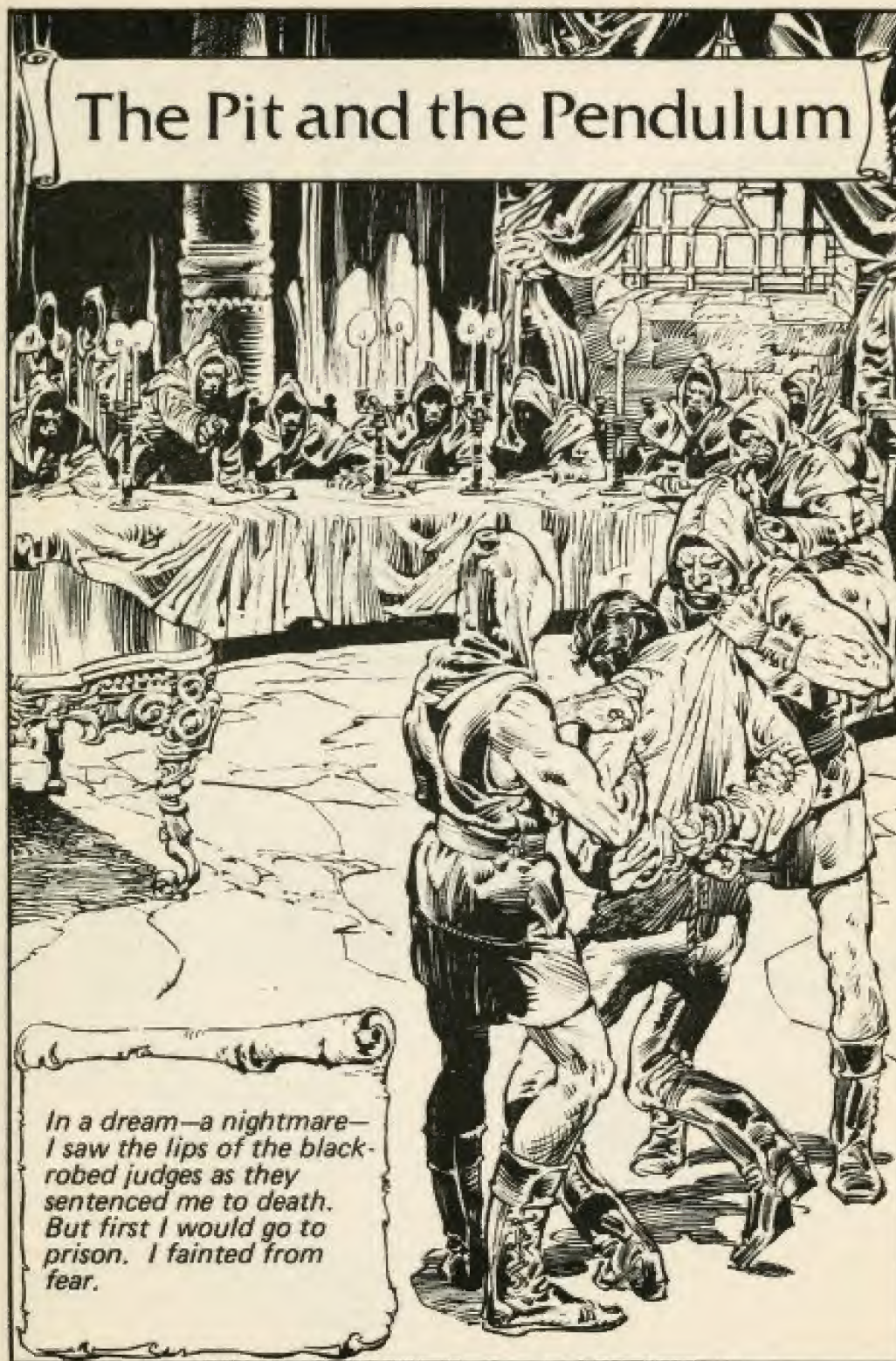
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The Pit and the Pendulum



*In a dream—a nightmare—
I saw the lips of the black-
robed judges as they
sentenced me to death.
But first I would go to
prison. I fainted from
fear.*

POCKET CLASSICS

*There were shadow memories
of tall figures that lifted and
carried me down . . .*



*At length I came to. I lay on
my back in the dark. My
hands were no longer tied.*



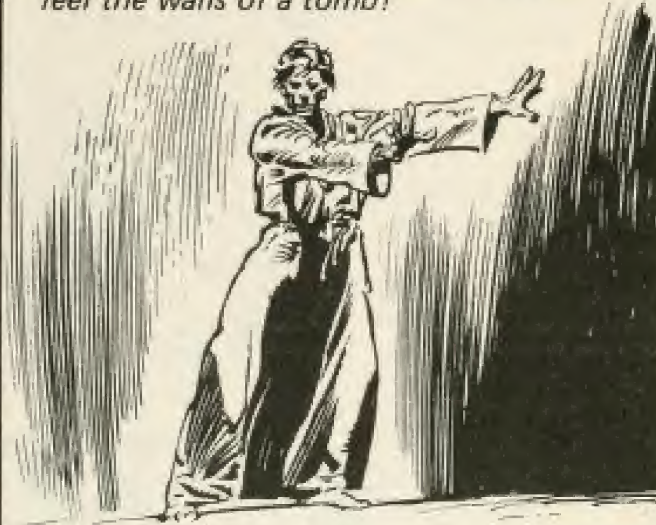
*Without opening my eyes I reached
out my hand. It lay upon something
damp and hard.*

The Best of Poe

I was afraid to open my eyes, afraid that I would see—nothing! I tried, and it was so! There was only the dark.



I leaped to my feet and reached wildly in all directions. I was afraid I would feel the walls of a tomb!



At length my hands found a wall, smooth, slimy, and cold. I walked around it trying to figure out the size of my prison.

The ground was slippery. Soon I stumbled and fell.



Too tired to get up again, I remained there and fell asleep.



POCKET CLASSICS

Awakening, I felt bread and water beside me. I ate and drank eagerly. Then I decided to explore further. I would try to cross my prison.

I stepped out carefully at first, then more freely. Suddenly I stumbled on the torn hem of my robe and fell forward.



I lay on my face. My chin rested on the prison floor. But from my lips up, my head touched nothing!



I put forward my arm, and trembled to find that I had fallen at the edge of a circular pit.



A piece of stone fell into the pit. For seconds I heard it echo far, far below.

The Best of Poe

Shaking all over, I felt my way back to the wall. Finally I fell into a heavy sleep. When I awoke, everything had changed.

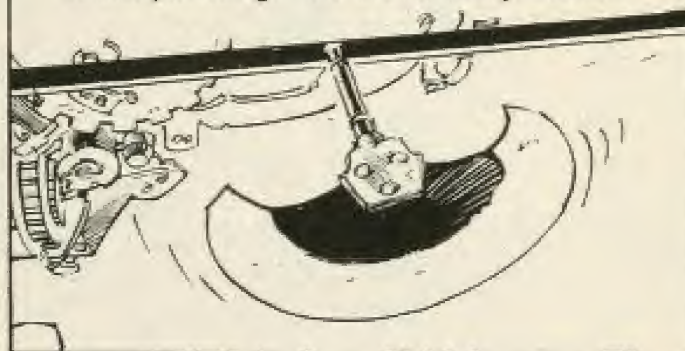


A light came from somewhere above me, and I raised my head to look around. Frightening figures were painted on the walls. The circular pit lay in the exact center of my prison.

Above me on the high ceiling was painted a figure of old Father Time, with a clock's pendulum in place of his scythe.



Was the pendulum, as I first thought, part of the painting? Or did it really move?

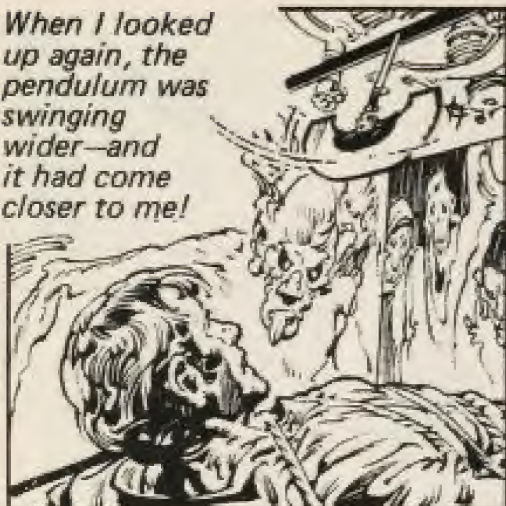


A slight noise made me turn my head. Looking at the floor, I saw troops of large rats coming from the pit. They were after some meat that had been left beside me.



POCKET CLASSICS

When I looked up again, the pendulum was swinging wider—and it had come closer to me!



At its end was a half-circle of steel—like a giant razor blade!



For hours—perhaps days—I watched in terror as it swung above me:



closer . . .

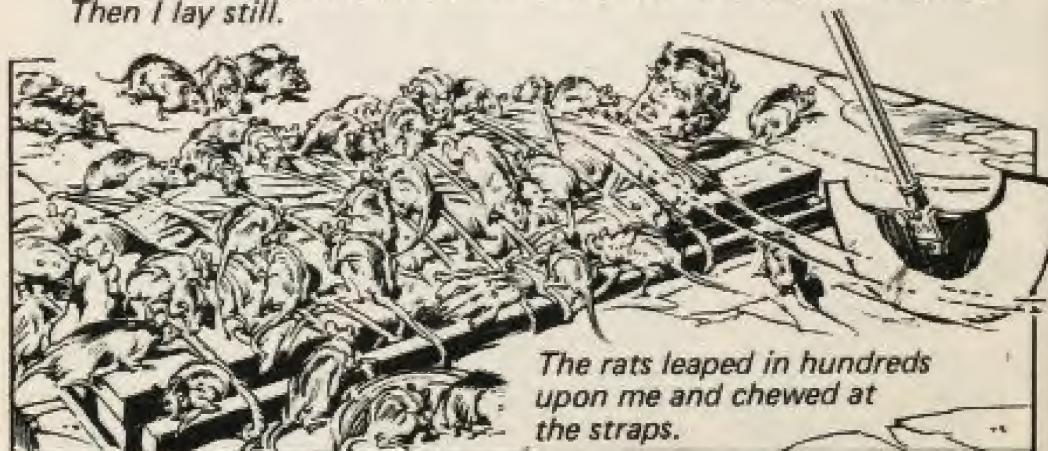


and closer . . .



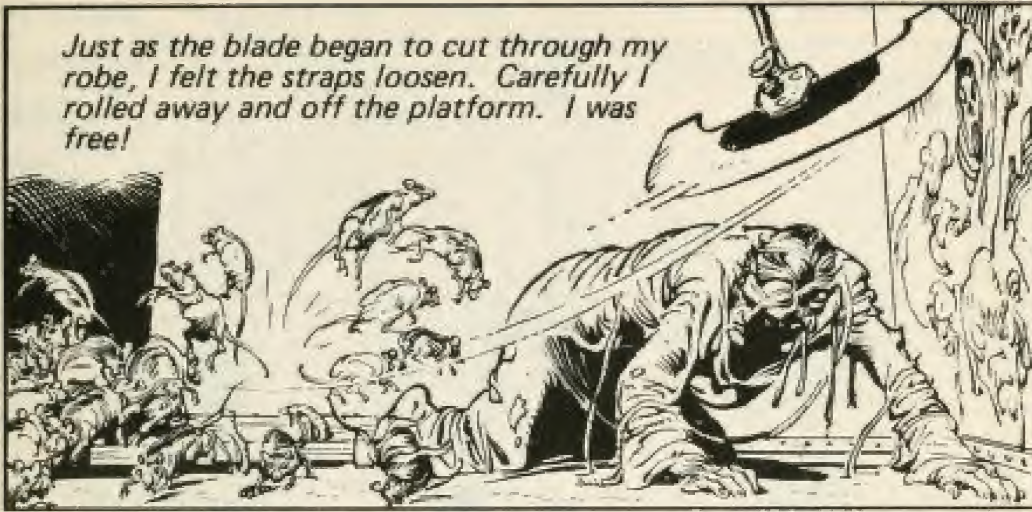
and yet closer.

And then, almost too late, I began to think. I reached for the remains of the meat and rubbed the straps that were holding me. Then I lay still.



The rats leaped in hundreds upon me and chewed at the straps.

Just as the blade began to cut through my robe, I felt the straps loosen. Carefully I rolled away and off the platform. I was free!



Then the pendulum stopped. It was drawn up to the ceiling. But the metal walls began to glow with heat!



My prison grew terribly hot—and the walls began to close in on me!



POCKET CLASSICS

I gasped for breath. The burning walls pressed me toward the pit.



Moments later, I trembled on its edge. I was lost. I gave one loud, long, and final scream of terror.

Suddenly there was a loud blast as of many trumpets. With a harsh, grating sound, the walls rushed back. An arm caught mine as I began to fall, fainting, into the pit.



It was the arm of General Lasalle. The French army had entered Toledo. My enemies had been overthrown, and I was safe at last!

THE
END

The Fall of the House of Usher



The Narrator



Roderick Usher

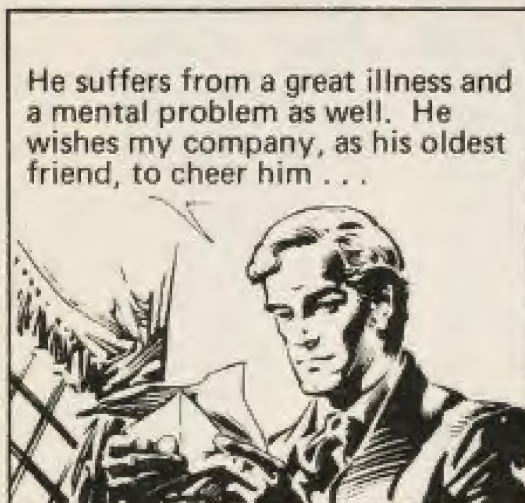


Madeline Usher



During the whole of a dark autumn day I had been riding alone through the dreary countryside. I found myself, at evening, near the gloomy old House of Usher. As soon as I saw it, my spirit was struck with sorrow.

POCKET CLASSICS



The Best of Poe

Another servant led me in silence through many dark hallways.



On a staircase we met the family doctor. I did not like his look of fear.



Then the servant led me into a large room where his master rose from a couch to greet me.



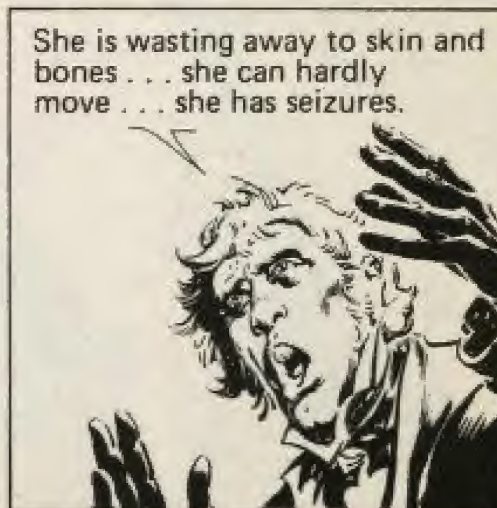
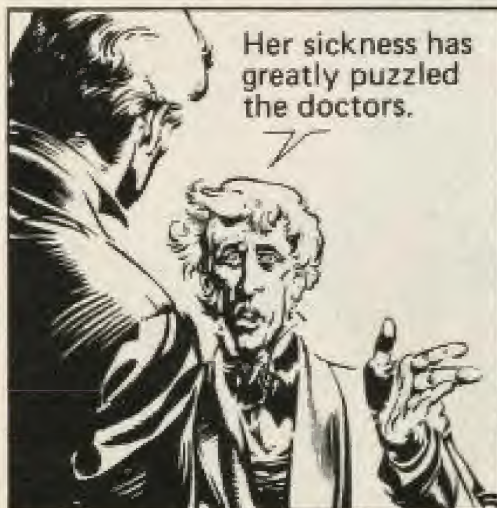
POCKET CLASSICS



But much of his sorrow could be traced to the terrible illness of his beloved sister, who was slowly dying.



She has been my only companion for years. Her death will make me the last of the Ushers!



The Best of Poe

As he spoke, the lady Madeline passed through a far corner of the room without noticing me, and disappeared.



That sight could well have been the last I saw of her, for that night the illness forced her to bed.

For several days I tried to make my friend happy again.



We painted together.

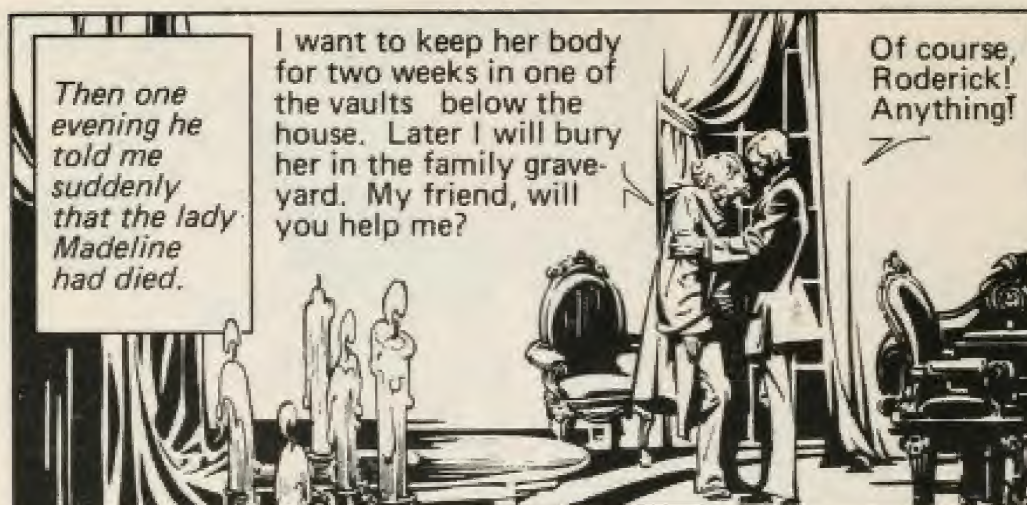


We read together.

Sometimes I listened to him play the guitar.



POCKET CLASSICS



We carried the body to a vault deep beneath the cellars of the house.



Our torches kept going out because there was so little air in the passageway.



Looking upon her face for the last time, I noted that she seemed almost alive. People with her illness, I knew, often looked like that even after death.



We were twins. Each of us always knew what the other was thinking.

The Best of Poe



Then we replaced the coffin lid and fastened it tightly.



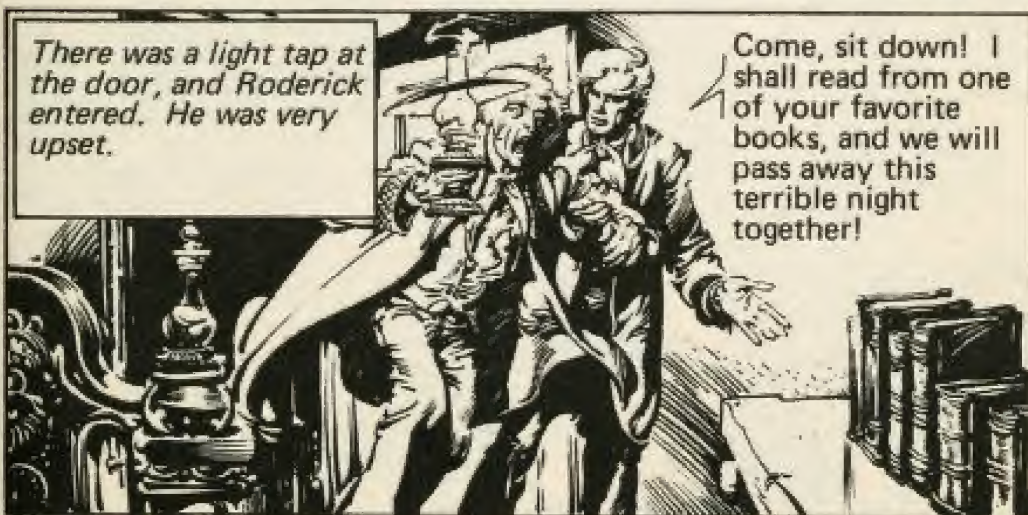
The great iron door scraped on its hinges as we closed and locked it.

Days of sorrow brought changes in my friend. He roamed from room to room as if he were lost. He stared into space for long hours, as if listening to some sound that was not there.

I felt myself grow frightened at his terror. One night I rose, dressed, and paced the floor, unable to sleep.



It is only this dark room—and the storm outside that keep me from sleeping!



There was a light tap at the door, and Roderick entered. He was very upset.

Come, sit down! I shall read from one of your favorite books, and we will pass away this terrible night together!

POCKET CLASSICS

In the story, the hero broke into a room: "He so cracked, and ripped, and tore . . . that the noise of the dry wood echoed . . ."



You heard?

It is nothing!
The storm!

From below there came a scraping sound . . . and then a hollow clanging.

" . . . a great and terrible ringing sound . . ."



Yet from a distant part of the building, there had come a cracking, ripping noise.



Yes, I hear it!
For hours, for days I've heard it—yet I dared not speak!

We have put my sister in her tomb alive!



I heard her first small movements in the coffin, the scraping of the iron hinges, and now her footstep on the stair. I tell you that she now stands outside the door!



*The heavy doors drew back—
and there stood the figure of
the lady Madeline of Usher,
with blood upon her robes.*



*With a low, moaning
cry, she fell upon her
brother. Dying for
certain now, she
threw him to the
floor with the weight
of her body. And he,
struck with terror,
died beside her.*



*I fled from the house,
out across the bridge
and into the storm.*



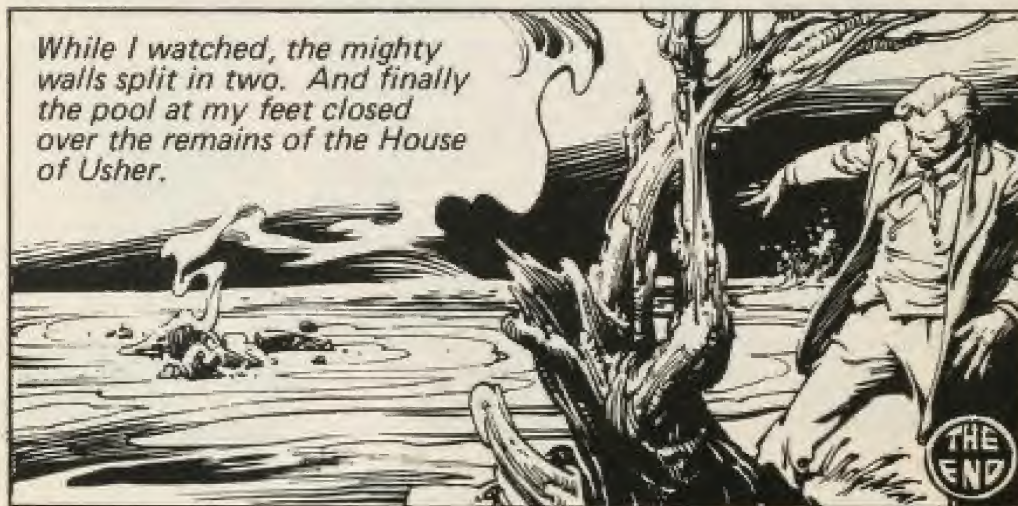
POCKET CLASSICS

Suddenly behind me there shone a bright light.



It was a blood-red moon, shining through the widening crack in the house.

While I watched, the mighty walls split in two. And finally the pool at my feet closed over the remains of the House of Usher.

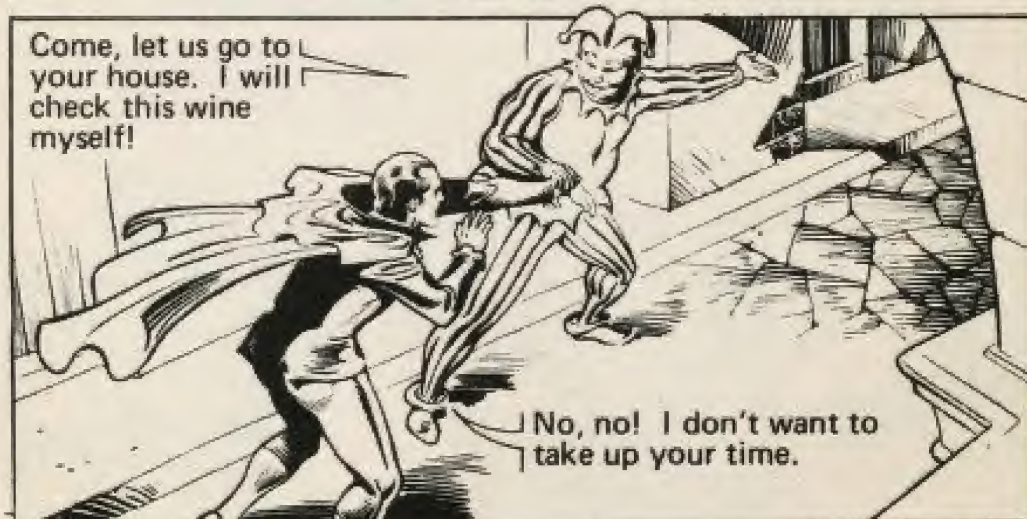
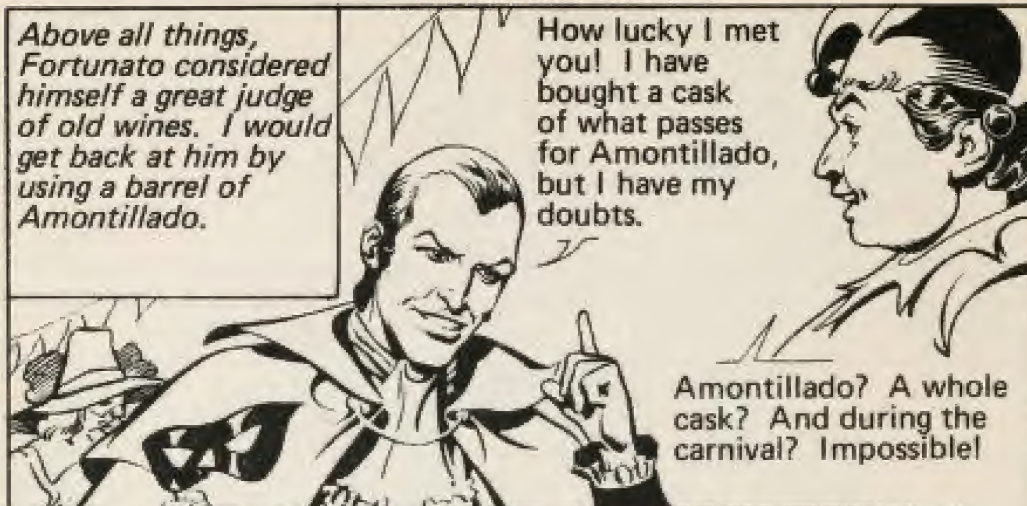


The Cask of Amontillado

Fortunato had harmed me a thousand times. But when he insulted me also, I swore to get even with him. I would kill him—and I would get away with it! Meanwhile, I let him think he was my good friend.



POCKET CLASSICS



The Best of Poe

You have a bad cold, and the vaults are very damp.



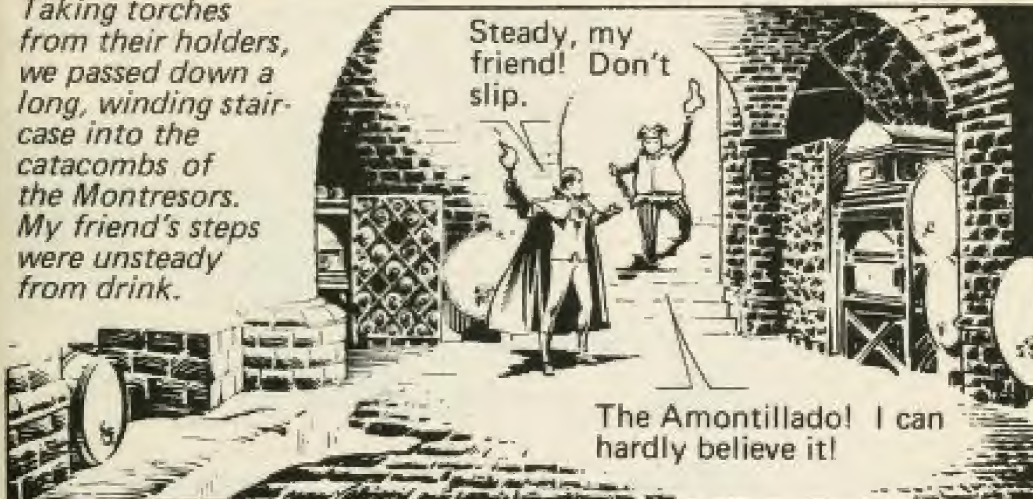
The cold is nothing! Amontillado! Let us go!

I allowed him to hurry me to my house.



The place is empty. The servants are all at the carnival.

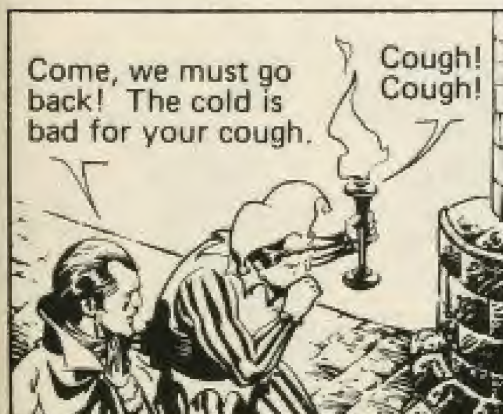
Taking torches from their holders, we passed down a long, winding staircase into the catacombs of the Montresors.



Steady, my friend! Don't slip.

The Amontillado! I can hardly believe it!

Soon a coughing spell forced Fortunato to stop.



Come, we must go back! The cold is bad for your cough.

Cough! Cough!

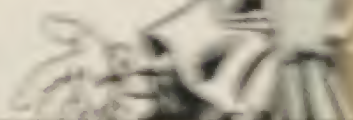
Your health is important! You are rich, respected, admired. You will be ill . . .

The cough is nothing! I shall not die of a cough!



PIRATE CLASSICS

Taking a shortcut
 when I was a child,
 I knocked
 off the wall and
 landed in the
 fireplace. He
 shook his head.



We took my arm
 and we walked on,
 passing through
 the arches. At
 last we reached a
 deep cave with
 an old tree that
 our torches would
 hardly burn.

The cave
 was dark
 and damp.

Grabbed
 The Lord
 of the
 castle.



He stepped forward,
 his boots a-chin, and
 around the wall he

Put your hand
 It is very damp
 want to go to
 back your



Digging into the pile
of bones, I took out
building stones,
cement, and a
crowl. Then I
began to walk up the
entrance to the cave



There was a low,
moaning cry from
inside and a great
settling of stones.
I sat down and
waited.



THE END

POCKET CLASSICS



He took my arm and we walked on, passing through low arches. At last we reached a deep cave with air so bad that our torches would hardly burn.

Three sides were lined with bodies. From the fourth, the bones had been thrown down and lay upon the earth.

Go ahead! The Amon-tillado is in there!



He stepped forward, but stopped at the rock wall. In it were two iron hooks, a chain, and a padlock. In a second I had wrapped the chain around his waist and fastened him there.



Digging into the pile of bones, I took out building stones, cement, and a trowel. Then I began to wall up the entrance to the cave.



There was a low, moaning cry from inside and a great rattling of chains. I sat down and waited.



Ahhhhhhhhh!
Montresor!
Montresor!

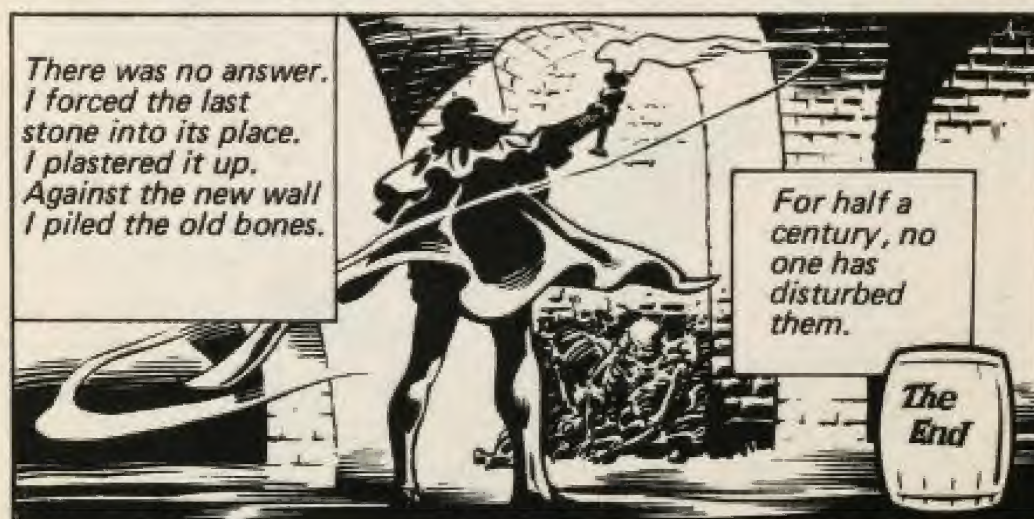
At last the clanking stopped. I continued my work. Finally there was only one stone to be fitted in. There came from the cave a low laugh and a sad voice.

Ha! Ha! Ha! A very good joke indeed! We will have many a laugh about it at the carnival, over our wine . . .



The Amontillado?

POCKET CLASSICS



The Murders in the Rue Morgue

This was the scene of the murders in which the Paris police found themselves without a clue. My friend Dupin would solve the case by using his reason alone.



The Narrator



Dupin



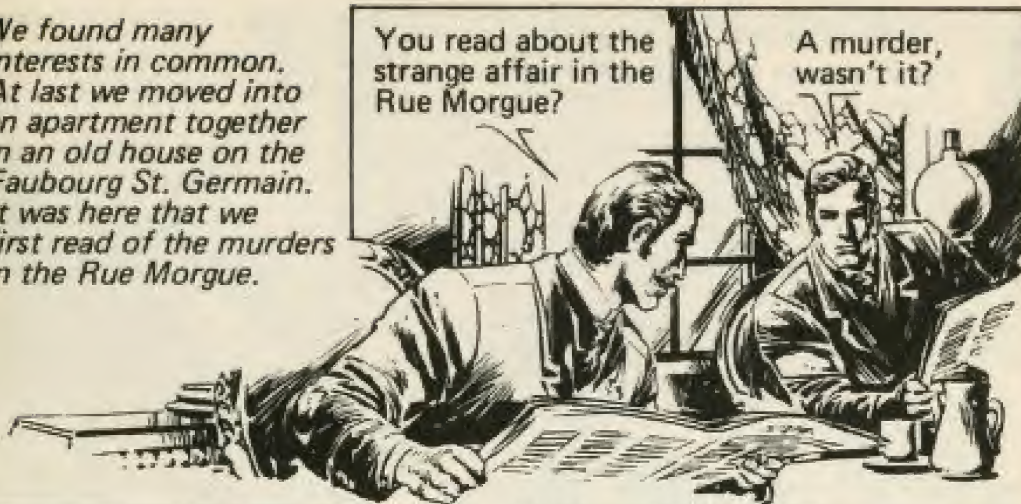
French Sailor

POCKET CLASSICS



The Best of Poe

We found many interests in common. At last we moved into an apartment together in an old house on the Faubourg St. Germain. It was here that we first read of the murders in the Rue Morgue.



You read about the strange affair in the Rue Morgue?

A murder, wasn't it?

Murder, yes, but not of the usual kind.



Come! Picture this, if you will! About three o'clock this morning, the neighbors were awakened by terrible cries from the fourth floor of a house in the Rue Morgue . . .



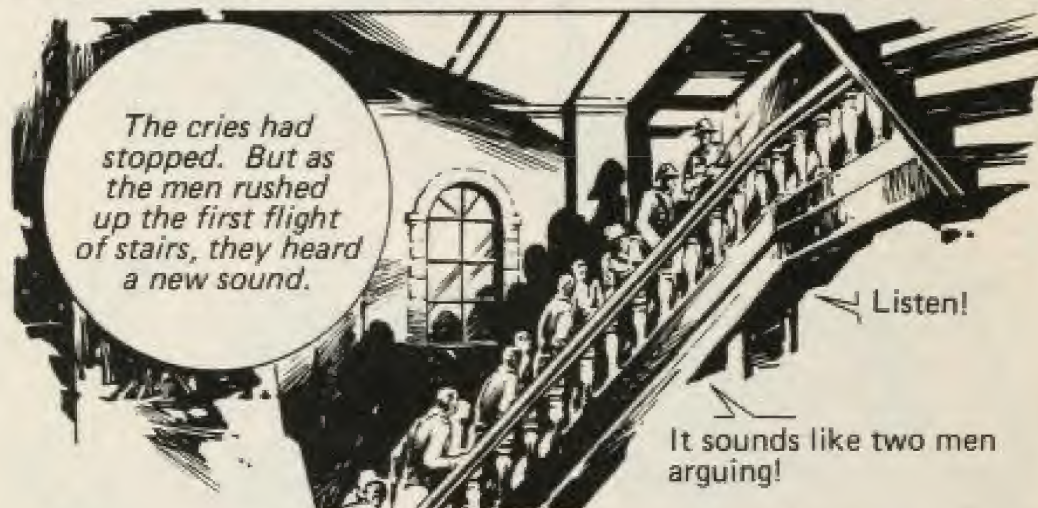
Awful sounds, they were . . . like someone being killed!



Who lives there?

Madame L'Espanaye and her daughter Camille!

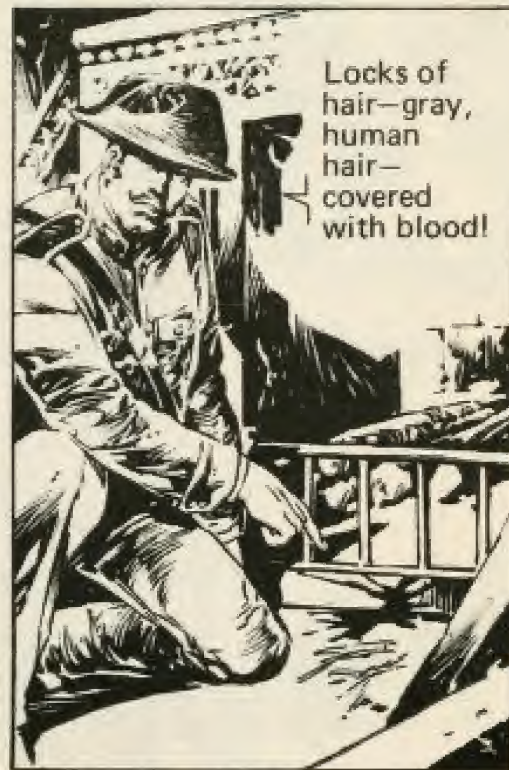
POCKET CLASSICS



But the sounds stopped, and all was quiet. The men ran through the house, searching from room to room. At last they came to a large back room on the fourth floor.



The Best of Poe



POCKET CLASSICS

*A policeman
picked up two
bags from the
floor.*

Gold! At least four
thousand francs
in gold!



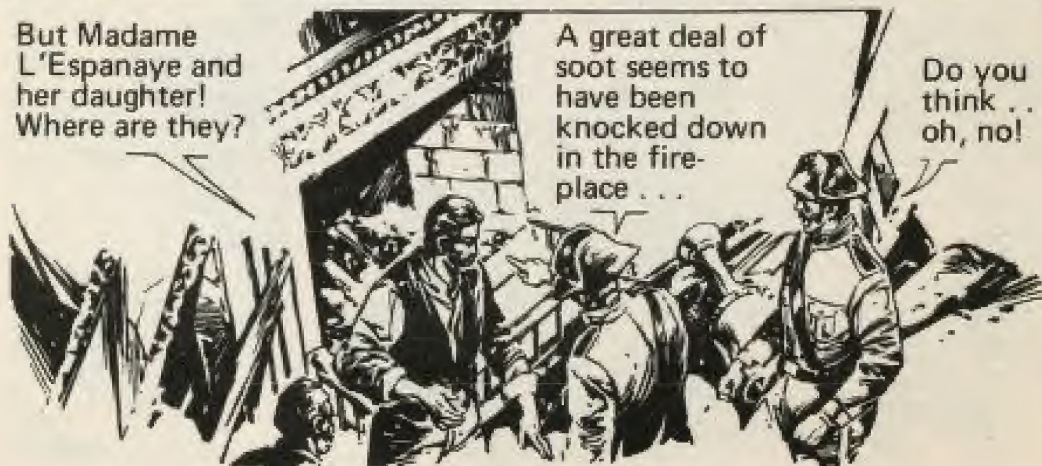
A safe—but
open!



Nothing here but
a few old letters.



But Madame
L'Espanaye and
her daughter!
Where are they?



A great deal of
soot seems to
have been
knocked down
in the fire-
place . . .

Do you
think . . .
oh, no!

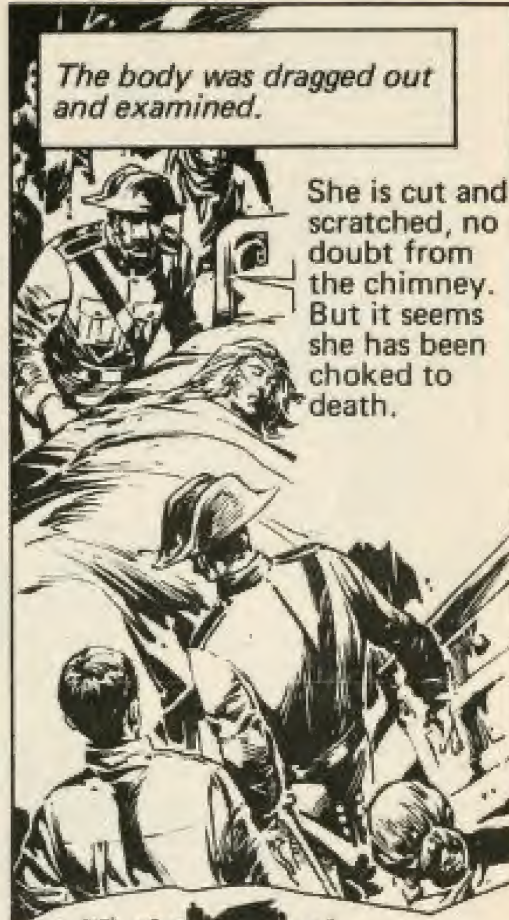
The Best of Poe

Yes . . . it is here.
A body!



*The body of the daughter
had been forced up the
narrow chimney opening.
It was still quite warm.*

*The body was dragged out
and examined.*



She is cut and
scratched, no
doubt from
the chimney.
But it seems
she has been
choked to
death.

*After searching the rest
of the house without
finding anything else,
the group made its
way into a small
paved yard in the rear.*



It is the old lady—
Madame
L'Espanaye!

But who could know
her now!



*Madame had been badly beaten. Her
throat had been so deeply cut that
her head was almost separated from
her body.*

POCKET CLASSICS

To this terrible murder there is not yet the smallest clue.



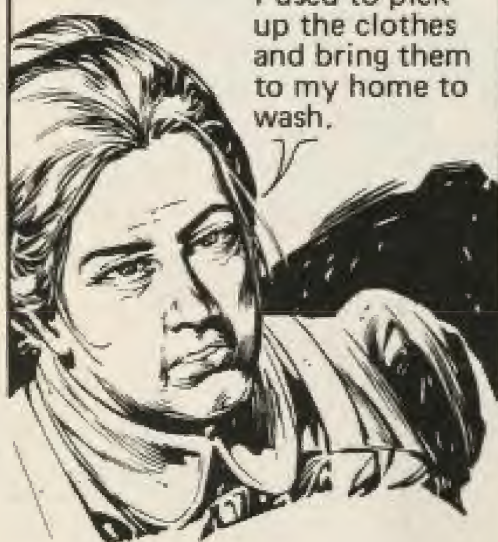
We looked eagerly for the next day's newspapers. Though nothing had been found, an account was given of the people who had been questioned.

There was Pauline Dubourg, a washer-woman.

Yes, I am Pauline Dubourg. I have washed clothes for the L'Espanayes for three years.



I used to pick up the clothes and bring them to my home to wash.



How did the mother and daughter get along together?

Why, very well! They always seemed very kind to each other.

The Best of Poe

Did you ever see any other person in the house?



Never at all! There was no servant, and I never saw a visitor.



Were they well off? Did they have money?

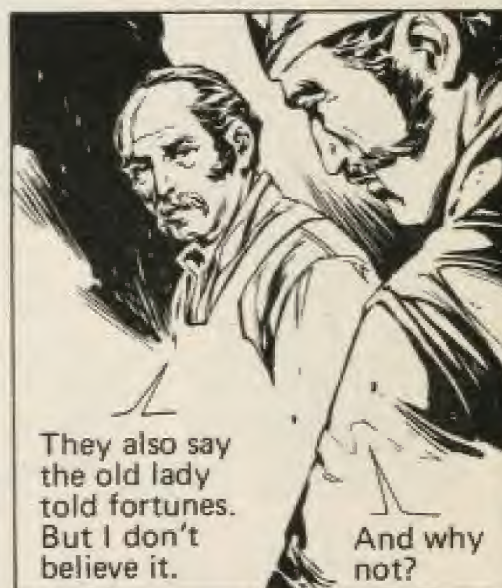
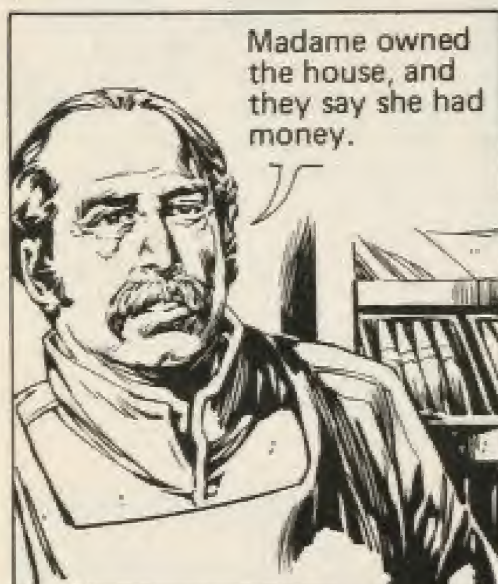
They paid me well, that is all I know! As for what people say, Madame was thought to have some money saved up. I believe she told fortunes for a living.

Very well. We will write out what you have said. Please come to the station to sign it.



Goodbye, monsieur.

POCKET CLASSICS



They lived a very quiet life. I have hardly seen anyone enter the door but the old lady and her daughter. A person came once or twice to deliver packages, and eight or ten times a doctor came.



The Best of Poe

It seems that many other neighbors said the same thing: that no one ever came to the house.



The shutters of the front windows were seldom open. Those in the rear were always closed, except for the one large back room on the fourth floor.



Isadore Muset, the policeman who first entered the house, made his report.



After breaking into the house, I led the way upstairs. Upon reaching the first landing, I heard two voices, loud and angry . . .

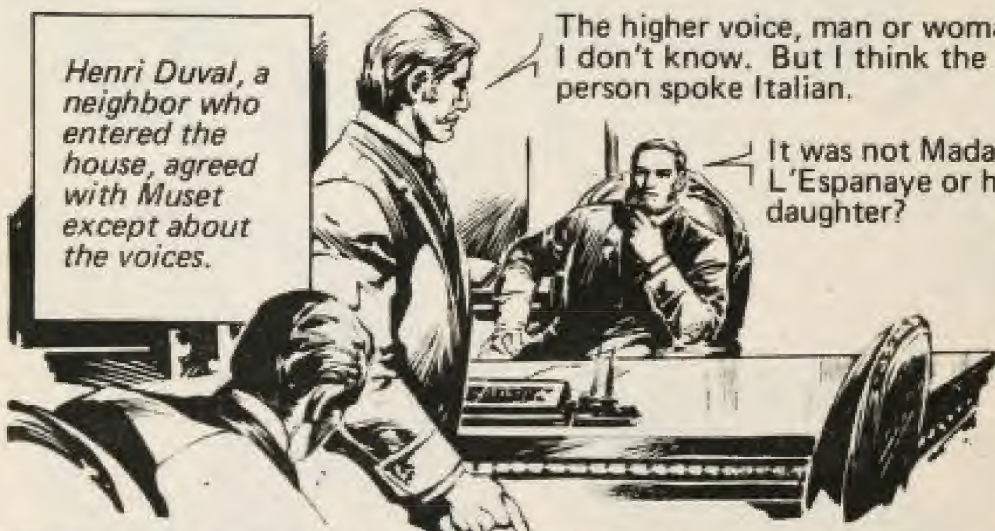
POCKET CLASSICS

One was gruff, the other high and thin—a very strange voice!



The first voice was that of a Frenchman. The second was that of a foreigner—man or woman, I could not tell. I believe the language was Spanish.

Henri Duval, a neighbor who entered the house, agreed with Muset except about the voices.



The higher voice, man or woman I don't know. But I think the person spoke Italian.

It was not Madame L'Espanaye or her daughter?



No, no! It was not French, and it was not the L'Espanayes! I have spoken with them many times!

The Best of Poe

A Dutchman passing by had joined the search of the house. Not speaking French, he was questioned in Dutch.

Monsieur Odenheimer agrees with the other reports except about the voices. He says the high voice was that of a man—a Frenchman!

William Bird, an Englishman who had lived for two years in Paris, had also passed by and joined the search. He was one of the first up the stairs.

The higher voice was very loud. It was certainly not that of an Englishman. It seemed to me to be German, but man or woman, I could not tell.

Monsieur Bird speaks German?

No, not at all.

POCKET CLASSICS

Also questioned was Alfonso Garcio, a Spanish undertaker who lived in the Rue Morgue.

I entered the house but I did not go up the stairs. I am too nervous! You understand?



But you could hear the voices?

Oh, yes, very well! The high voice was that of an Englishman. Of this I am sure!

You speak English, sir?

No, no! I judge by the kind of sound.



Alberto Montani, a seller of candy, was also one of the first to go up the stairs.



The high voice? It was quick and uneven. I think it was the voice of a Russian.

Do you know Russian?

The Best of Poe



No, monsieur. I am an Italian. I have never spoken with a native of Russia!

Jules Mignaud, a banker of the firm of Mignaud et Fils, also spoke to the police.

About Madame L'Espanaye, monsieur . . .

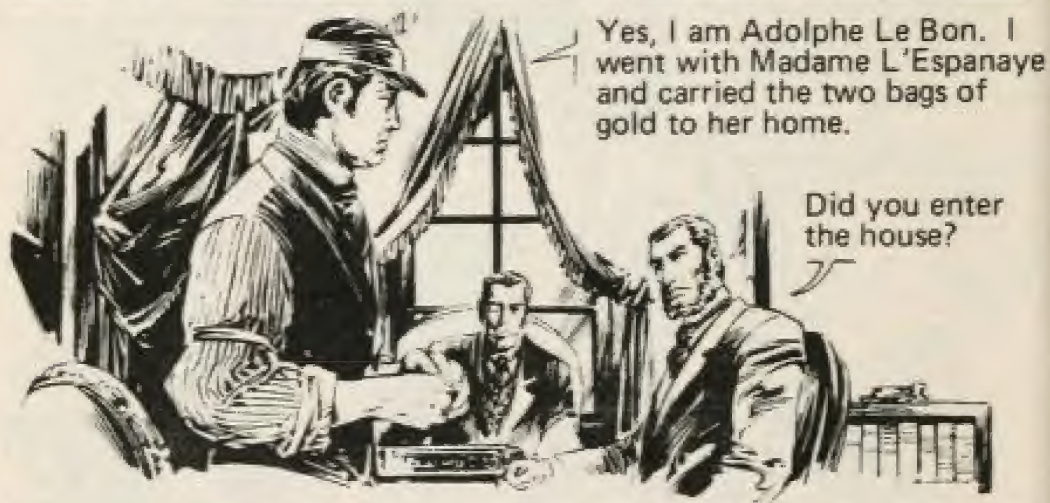
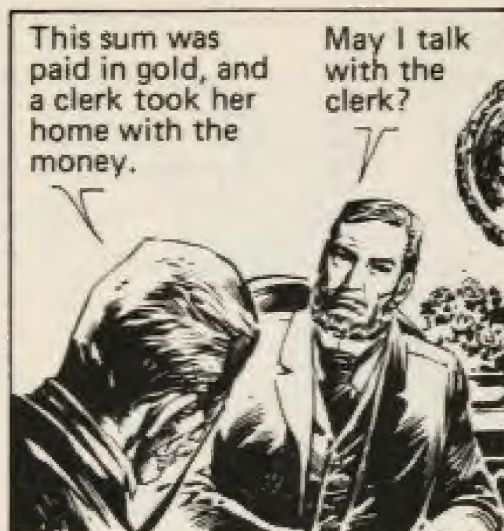


Madame L'Espanaye opened an account eight years ago. She owned some property.

She took nothing out until three days before her death, when she came for the sum of 4,000 francs.



POCKET CLASSICS



The Best of Poe

Now think carefully. Was there anyone else in sight—anyone going by?

There was no one at all! It is a side street, and very lonely.

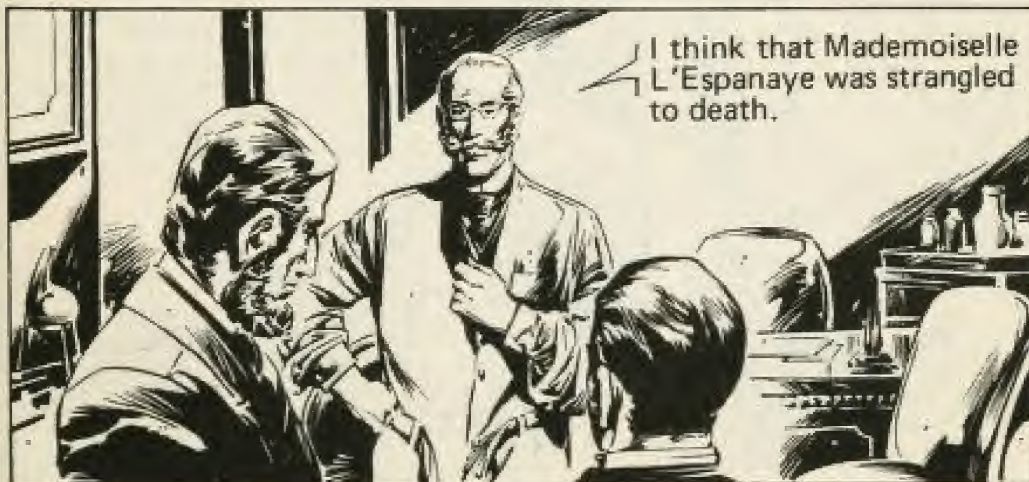


Paul Dumas, a doctor, also made a report.



I was called in about dawn to view the bodies. That of the young lady was much cut and scraped. That it had been forced up the chimney would account for it.

There were deep scratches below the chin, with a series of spots which must have been the marks of fingers.



I think that Mademoiselle L'Espanaye was strangled to death.

POCKET CLASSICS

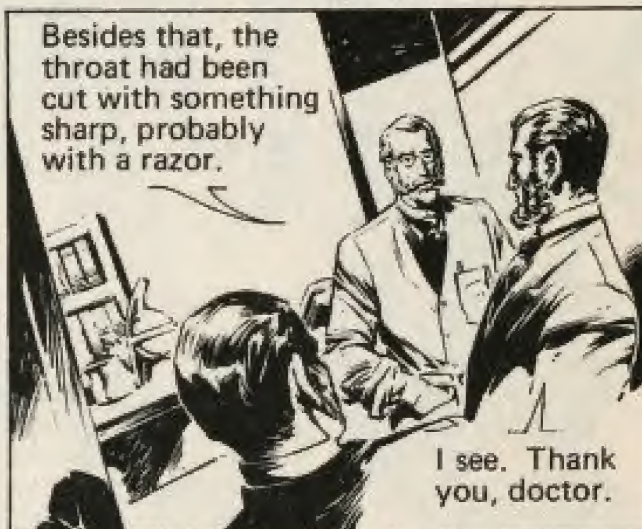
The body of the mother was terribly cut up. The bones on the right side were nearly all broken. The whole body was discolored.



A heavy club, a bar of iron, a chair: such a weapon in the hands of a strong man might have given such results. No woman could have done it.

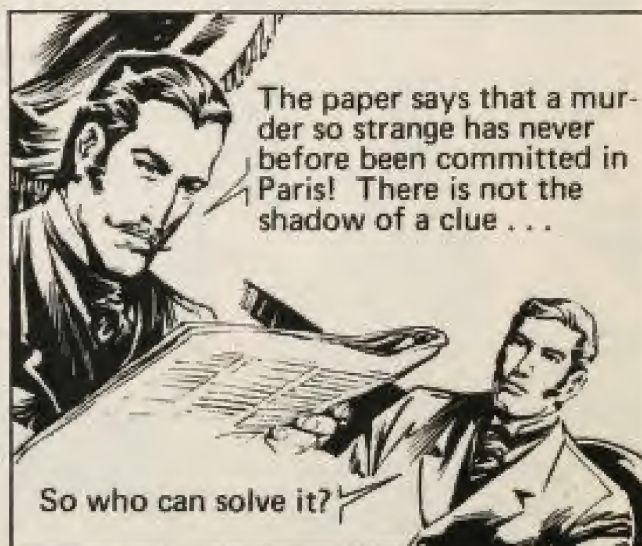


Besides that, the throat had been cut with something sharp, probably with a razor.



I see. Thank you, doctor.

The paper says that a murder so strange has never before been committed in Paris! There is not the shadow of a clue...



So who can solve it?

The Best of Poe

Later, the evening paper brought the news that although there were no new clues, Adolphe Le Bon had been arrested.



Let us check into these murders ourselves! Le Bon helped me once, for which I am grateful.

We will go and see the house with our own eyes. I know the chief of police, and shall have no trouble being allowed to do so.



Very well.

We reached the Rue Morgue in the late afternoon. There were still many people looking up at the house.



POCKET CLASSICS

We walked through an alley and came to the rear of the house. Dupin looked around with great interest.



Returning to the front door, we were let in by the police. We went up to the bedroom where the bodies still lay. Dupin looked at everything, including the bodies.

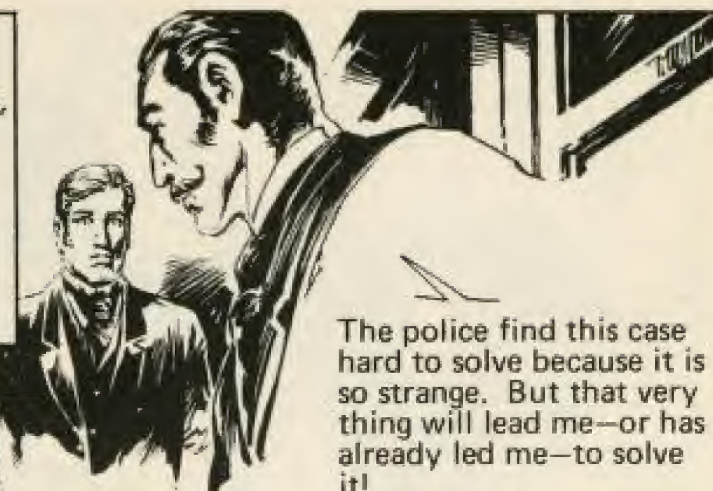
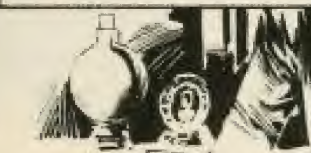


On the way home we stopped at the offices of Le Monde, a daily paper read by sailors and ship's captains.



The Best of Poe

Upon reaching home, Dupin would not talk about the murders until noon the next day. Then he made a surprising remark.



The police find this case hard to solve because it is so strange. But that very thing will lead me—or has already led me—to solve it!

I am waiting for a person who must have known about these crimes. I look for the man here—in this room—any moment now.



If he comes, we must keep him here. Here are some guns. We both know how to use them.

Scarcely believing what I heard, I took the gun, and Dupin continued.



There was the report of the two voices heard in argument. What was the strangest part of that report?

Everyone agreed that one man was a Frenchman. But everyone disagreed on the second, or higher voice.

POCKET CLASSICS

Not only did they disagree, but each of these men, from five different countries, thought the voice spoke a foreign language!



Not a single word could be understood! This gives us a great clue!

Then—the room. The doors were locked from inside; there were no secret exits. The chimneys were too narrow to let a cat through. The killers *must* have left through the windows!



But the police found them nailed shut—from the inside!

They found that they could not force the windows up. There was a large nail through the window frame and sill of each one.



Well?

But I removed the nail, and I still could not force the window up! I looked for, and found, a hidden spring keeping it shut.



In the case of the window behind the bed, some years ago, the nail had been broken in two. Although it remained in place and looked whole, it no longer held the window shut.



If someone got away through that window, and let it close behind him, the hidden spring would lock the window. Yet it would seem that the nail was doing so!



So you have solved that part of it! But how did the killer get down?



A killer who was a good climber could have used the outside shutter to swing himself from the window to the lightning rod. It runs from the roof to the ground nearby. He could have climbed down the rod!

POCKET CLASSICS

So we have a killer with a strange voice who is a good climber. He also has great strength and is stupid enough to leave four thousand francs in gold behind him!

He is a madman! Someone who has escaped from a mental hospital!

Look at this lock of hair which I removed from Madame L'Espanaye's fingers!

I removed the hair from the envelope and looked at it carefully.

Dupin! This is not human hair!

I did not say it was. Now read from this book.

The Best of Poe

It described the large orang-outang ape of the East Indian islands. The animal had great size, strength, and agility. I understood the full story of the murders at last.



Yes, I see. But what of the second voice, the Frenchman?

I suppose him to be a sailor, the owner of the animal. He must know something of the murders.

Perhaps it got away from him and he followed it. It is probably still loose. I left this advertisement at the newspaper last night. I think it will bring him here.



it was a large orang-outang the owner (ascertained to be a sailor from a Maltese vessel) may have the animal again upon identifying it and paying a few charges.



At this moment we heard a step upon the stairs.

Be ready with your gun, but do not show or use it unless I tell you to.

POCKET CLASSICS



I have no way of telling—four or five years, perhaps. You have him here?



The Best of Poe

My friend, we mean you no harm. I know you did not kill those women. But an innocent man is now in jail. He is charged with a crime of which you can point out the killer!



So help me, I will tell you all I know. I am innocent of this crime!



He told us that he had brought the animal home from a recent voyage. He had kept it safely at his Paris home until it recovered from a foot wound. Then he planned to sell it. It was kept in a cage in an open closet.

But coming home late one night, he found the animal in his bedroom. It was imitating its master shaving!



Terrified at seeing the animal holding a razor, the sailor brought out a whip he sometimes used to control it.

POCKET CLASSICS

But seeing the whip, the animal sprang through the door of the room, ran down the stairs, and jumped through an open window into the street.



Still carrying the razor, the ape led the sailor on a chase through the empty city streets. At last, seeing a lighted window, it rushed into a back yard in the Rue Morgue.

Catching sight of a lightning rod, it climbed up.

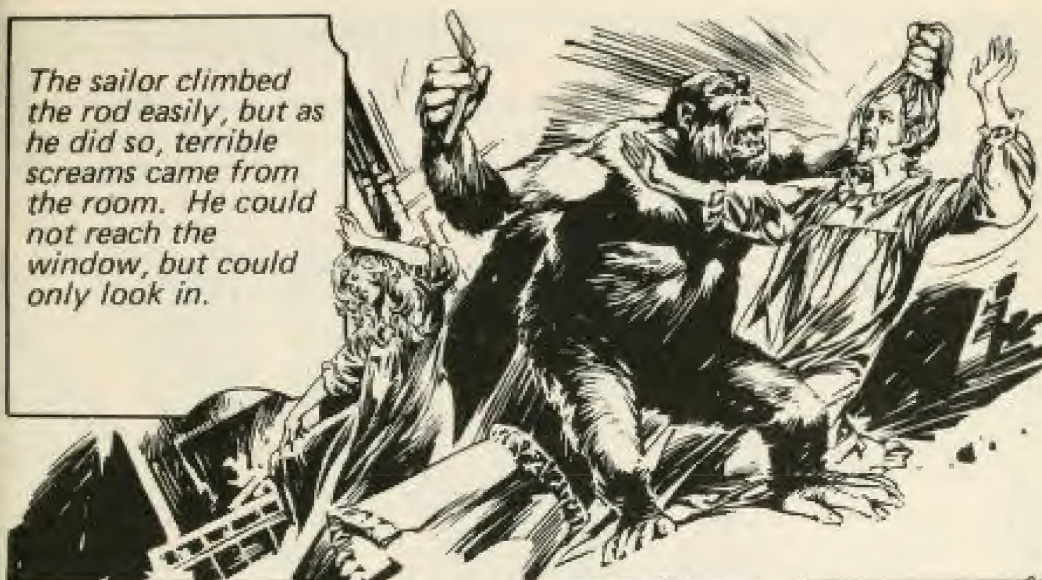


Reaching the fourth floor, it grasped a shutter and swung itself over and through the window.



The Best of Poe

The sailor climbed the rod easily, but as he did so, terrible screams came from the room. He could not reach the window, but could only look in.



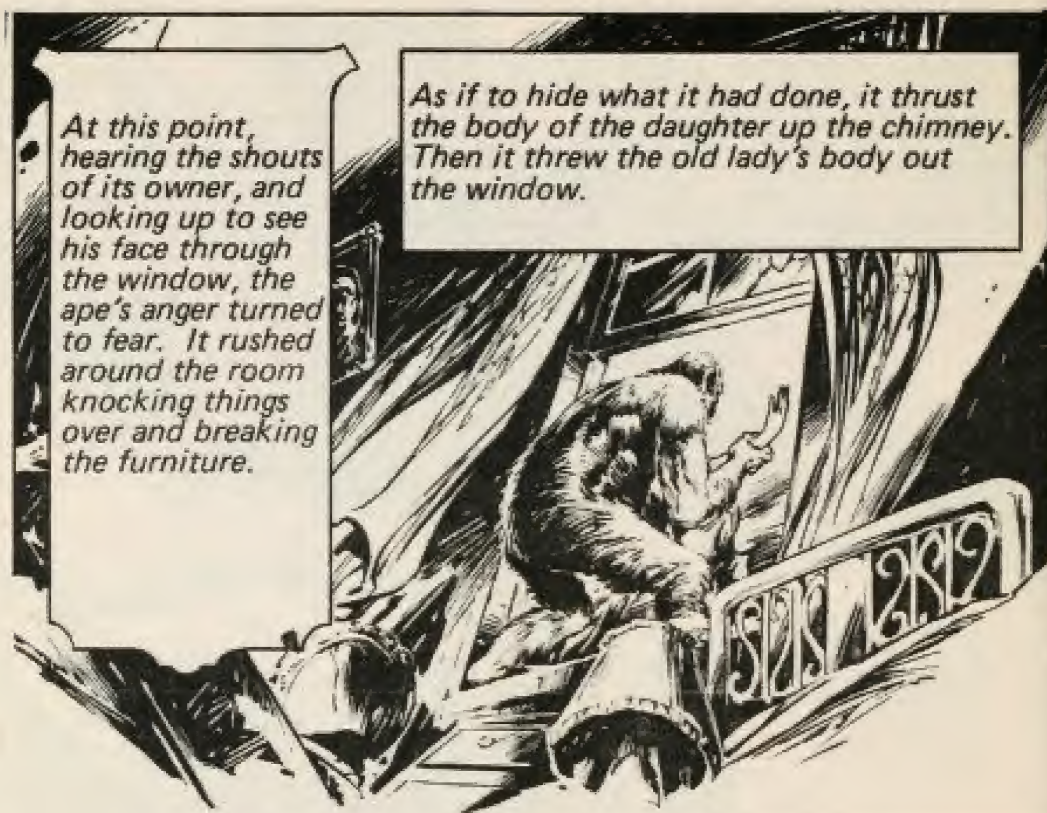
Angered by her screams, the ape swept the razor across the old lady's throat.



Then, its anger made worse by the sight of blood, the ape grabbed the daughter, who had fainted, and choked her.



POCKET CLASSICS



At this point, hearing the shouts of its owner, and looking up to see his face through the window, the ape's anger turned to fear. It rushed around the room knocking things over and breaking the furniture.

As if to hide what it had done, it thrust the body of the daughter up the chimney. Then it threw the old lady's body out the window.

The sailor quickly slid down the rod.



Terrified at what he had seen, he ran home, leaving the orang-outang to its fate. The ape must have left the room just before the door was broken in.



The Best of Poe

The next day we heard that the orang-outang had been caught. Its owner then sold it for a good sum.



When we told our story to the chief of police, Le Bon was let go at once.

You are free to go, Monsieur Le Bon.

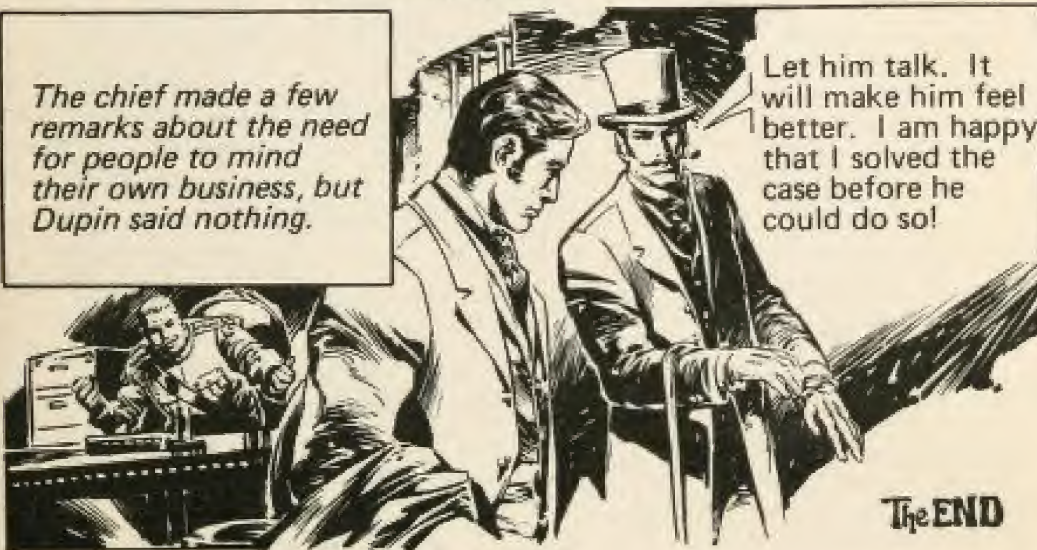
A thousand thanks, Monsieur Dupin!

It was nothing at all.

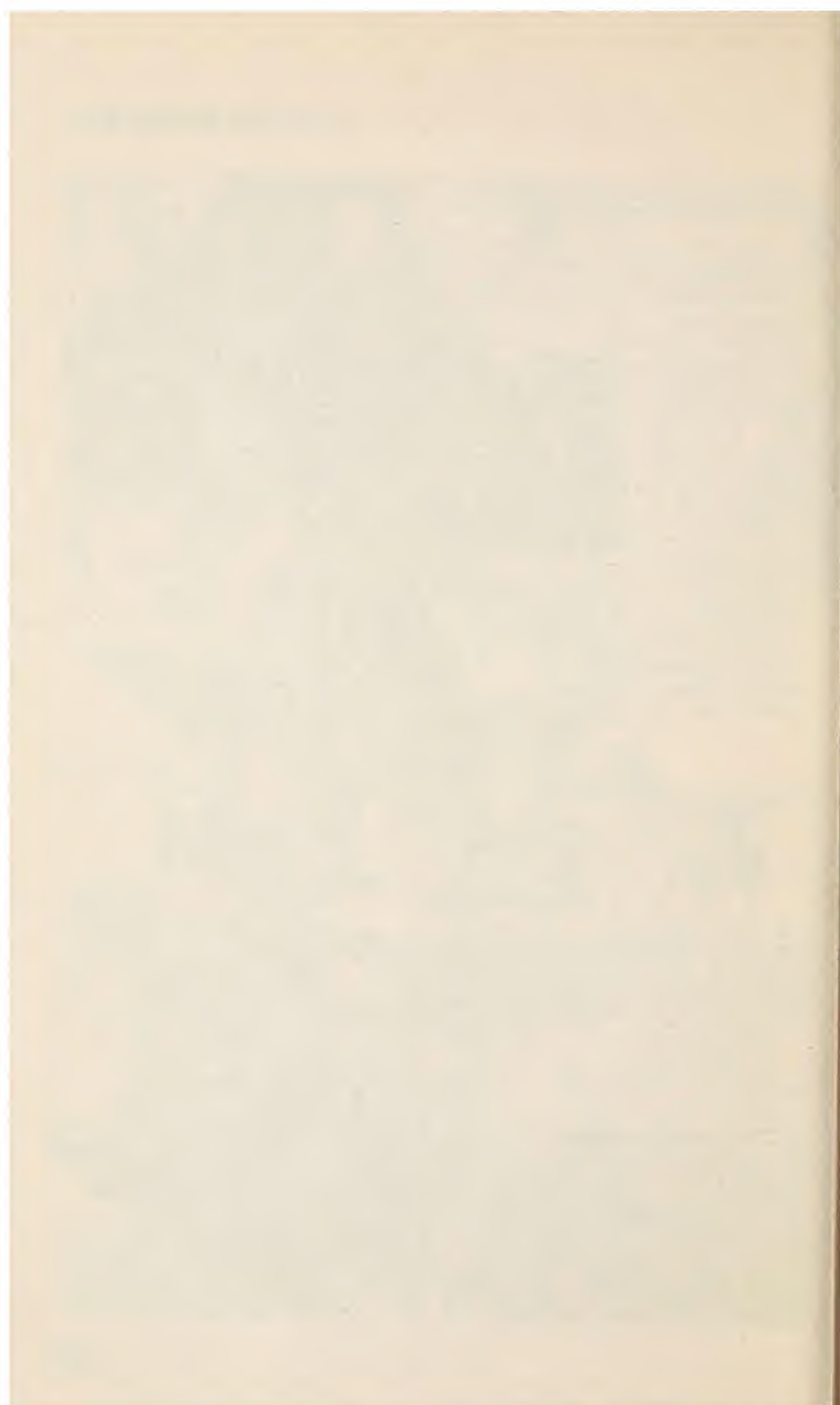


The chief made a few remarks about the need for people to mind their own business, but Dupin said nothing.

Let him talk. It will make him feel better. I am happy that I solved the case before he could do so!



The END



COMPLETE LIST OF POCKET CLASSICS AVAILABLE

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- C 1 Black Beauty
- C 2 The Call of the Wild
- C 3 Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde
- C 4 Dracula
- C 5 Frankenstein
- C 6 Huckleberry Finn
- C 7 Moby Dick
- C 8 The Red Badge of Courage
- C 9 The Time Machine
- C10 Tom Sawyer
- C11 Treasure Island
- C12 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea
- C13 The Great Adventures of Sherlock Holmes
- C14 Gulliver's Travels
- C15 The Hunchback of Notre Dame
- C16 The Invisible Man
- C17 Journey to the Center of the Earth
- C18 Kidnapped
- C19 The Mysterious Island
- C20 The Scarlet Letter
- C21 The Story of My Life
- C22 A Tale of Two Cities
- C23 The Three Musketeers
- C24 The War of the Worlds
- C25 Around the World in Eighty Days
- C26 Captains Courageous
- C27 A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court
- C28 The Hound of the Baskervilles
- C29 The House of the Seven Gables
- C30 Jane Eyre
- C31 The Last of the Mohicans
- C32 The Best of O. Henry
- C33 The Best of Poe
- C34 Two Years Before the Mast
- C35 White Fang
- C36 Wuthering Heights
- C37 Ben Hur
- C38 A Christmas Carol
- C39 The Food of the Gods
- C40 Ivanhoe
- C41 The Man in the Iron Mask
- C42 The Prince and the Pauper
- C43 The Prisoner of Zenda
- C44 The Return of the Native
- C45 Robinson Crusoe
- C46 The Scarlet Pimpernel

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- C47 The Sea Wolf
- C48 The Swiss Family Robinson
- C49 Billy Budd
- C50 Crime and Punishment
- C51 Don Quixote
- C52 Great Expectations
- C53 Heidi
- C54 The Illiad
- C55 Lord Jim
- C56 The Mutiny on Board H.M.S. Bounty
- C57 The Odyssey
- C58 Oliver Twist
- C59 Pride and Prejudice
- C60 The Turn of the Screw

SHAKESPEARE

- S 1 As You Like It
- S 2 Hamlet
- S 3 Julius Caesar
- S 4 King Lear
- S 5 Macbeth
- S 6 The Merchant of Venice
- S 7 A Midsummer Night's Dream
- S 8 Othello
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- S10 The Taming of the Shrew
- S11 The Tempest
- S12 Twelfth Night



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